

# Are You Keeping an Eye on your Husband's Stenographer?

Then Listen to What a Stenographer Knows of Her Employer's Henpecked Home Life



The contrast between the homekeeper and the officekeeper is a big one and, oftentimes, hideously unfair.

BY MAYME OBER PEAK.

IN LIFE'S triangles the stenographer seems to play a leading role. The movies and the colorful pens of the fictionist are wont to picture her as a blonde vamp in long earrings, short skirts and flesh-colored silk hose, with a filmy georgette waist frankly exploiting physical charms. As tempter of man all the sins in the decalogue are laid at her door.

It is not surprising that you have come to look upon the woman in your husband's office as a bad influence. But it is surprising that, while considering her beneath your social notice, you have failed to consider her as a force to be reckoned with. Trusting in your own charms, you wouldn't acknowledge for the world that your husband's stenographer had anything to do with the "business engagement" that detained him downtown—even if your suspicions were aroused!

One wife and mother, however, freely admits her fears. In a recent letter commenting on a series of articles about the laxity of standards and growing away from the family hearthstone, she writes that she considers "the woman in the intimate employ of men" responsible for the conditions and a direct menace to home life.

"I am a plain home-maker," she says, "with the sixth of my seven sons and daughters to graduate from high school this week. One to follow soon, and I feel that I really know something about home life and its problems. For years there has been in my mind and upon my heart a desire to make a statement in regard to the home life of America.

"We are all so very thankful that our girls may receive an education as well as our boys. But every reader admits that, with all the education and advancement, there is something wrong somewhere. And there is something vitally wrong when so much is written in regard to the conditions of home life.

"For myself I have not felt it so much, but there must be a cause for the neglect of the home. For fully two generations our country in particular has gone on and on educating the young women to go into the intimate employ of men, which is the most powerful wedge that ever penetrated to the very foundations of the life of the home.

"It does not mean that there is an immoral condition existing, but it does mean this: In a measure the wife of today is superseded by the woman in the employ of her husband. So far it seems that very few people are considering this as a direct menace to home life, and parents go on placing their daughters into the intimate employ of men, ignoring the influence that this has upon the home life of that man, ignoring the influence upon the man and the influence upon the young woman.

"It is all too true wives have turned to all sorts of activities outside the home to find a something that will satisfy the soul. Some of them fully realize the danger to the home; others are apparently unconscious of the cause which makes them restless.

"Girls and women today are just as eager in the best interests of their husbands as ever in the world, but until this almost polygamist practice ceases and we return to 'one woman beside one man' we shall not see a return to a normal home life."

It is to give the wife an intimate and fairer insight into the business life of her husband and his assistant—an insight that may perhaps turn the tables and cause her to counteract outside competition with a more satisfying home life—that I set down here the plain, unvarnished truth as told in her own words by this "average stenographer," of whom there are thousands and thousands as against the hundreds of the flapper type.

"To begin with, I'm not a blonde," she says. "A blind man could see that. And my worst enemy wouldn't call me a vamp. Yet I'm a stenographer.

"I have always thought I had the proper amount of dignity, wore enough clothes and a sufficiently detached air in a business office to discourage personal attentions from men and took my job seriously.

"My office wardrobe is composed entirely of well-made, simple one-piece dresses with detachable collars and cuffs or of wash shirts with stocks. My hair is neither bobbed nor permanented, nor are my ankles encased in a filmy silk hose of the latest clock. And I do not possess a sequin coat! There is nothing loud or extreme about me and, so far as I am aware, I have no jarring habits. I never powder my nose in public, use a lip stick in private or pull out my eyebrows by the roots. There is no

gum rolling round in my mouth or stuck on the bottom of my desk. Yet I am a stenographer!

"And, speaking in terms of quantity—not quality—the average stenographer is just like me. There are thousands of them earning their living today, pounding the typewriter, who are wholesome, well educated, refined young women, with their hearts in their jobs and their heads turned toward some promised goal. Instead of spending every dollar on our backs, as we get the credit for, most of us are helping to pay the mortgage on the farm, sending kid brothers to school and in many ways lightening the burdens for the old folks at home.

"Our work-a-day life is brimful of interest, I'll admit. We are on the inside of big things, and those of us who are confidential stenographers and secretaries are entrusted with secrets of great moment. We are upsetting the old traditions—we can keep our business secrets just as we keep our youth and our good looks and our minds.

"There is an elixir in business, with its pulsing activity, contact and demand upon one's intellect and audacity, that keeps a woman young. You will find very few of the familiar type known as 'settled' among us. For now that the matrimonial altar is no longer the tipmost top of feminine ambition, the woman, who at 40 used to regard her life as past its climax, proclaiming it by her slovenly corpulence, carelessness of toilet and monotony of expression, no longer reaches this stage of physical and mental deterioration—if she is in business.

"No, indeed; her mind is just then entering its period of greatest dexterity and strength; her best judgment just being formed—at 40. Whereas, the stay-at-home, who has ceased to take any active interest in what goes on outside her four walls, who has reached the high-water mark to which the tide of feminine life flows, just because she has married and has children, slumps back and becomes old before her time. Three hundred and sixty-five days in the year she has the same thoughts, the same perspective, the same monotonous trials and worries which she pours into the ears of her husband 365 nights.

"The contrast between the home-keeper and the office-keeper is a big one and oftentimes hideously unfair. It is the boss' wife, however, who, strange to say, takes the superior attitude, putting herself on the higher plane and looking down on her husband's stenographer.

"Ours when the boss was sick I had to take the mail to his home and go over it with him every day. He was fairly well off, had a comfortable home with well-trained servants, and there was no reason why his wife shouldn't have had sufficient time to keep herself fit—mentally and physically. But as many times as I went to that house I never saw her look anything but disheveled and unattractive, or heard her discuss anything but the children and the servants and what things cost. She looked every day of 50, when I happen to know she was still on the sunny side of 30.

"I am sure Mr. Blank loved her, but what a severe strain she put on that love, neither the day, nor telephone calls and daily recitations of domestic woes during office hours!

"Regularly, every morning, just as we'd get started on the morning mail, she would ring up. 'May I speak to Mr. Blank,' she would inquire in her haughty, things-have-gone-wrong voice.

"'Ask her what she wants,' Mr. Blank invariably requested.

"'Mr. Blank is awfully busy just now, Mrs. Blank, and wants to know if I can take the message.'

"'Tell Mr. Blank,' bristles Mrs. Blank, 'to come to the phone at once!'

"Mr. Blank takes the receiver, stands on one foot and then the other, finally gets in a word.

"'Well, try another dealer. Coal's hard to get these days, as you'd know if you read the papers, and—'

"'What's that? You don't have time to keep up with current events? Don't be silly, Delia. The man hasn't got any grudge against us; we don't owe him anything. He's telling the truth; he's probably got no coal. Better call up another dealer right away.'

"Hanging up the receiver, Mr. Blank patiently return to his desk, with a bit of shadow on his face and a distracted look. A few hours later, Mrs. Blank telephones to advise Mr. Blank that Bobby is threatened with one of his stomach attacks and she has just put him to bed, which means that, as it is the middle of the night, she will have to give up her bridge game at the club. And will Mr. Blank please bring some fruit when he comes home?

"With his mind scattered in 40 different directions, Mr. Blank settles down to work again. Between 4 and 5, that part of the day when nerves are worn and frazzled, Mrs. Blank calls up Mr. Blank, in the midst of dictating a letter about that R and X contract he's been trying to land for a month; having got my wireless that it was no use to resist, he reached helplessly for the receiver.

"What is it, dear?" he asks. "Is Bobby worse? Oh!" he sighs, relieved, "and what is everybody else saying?"

"You don't know, then, what makes you think he is asking too much? Um, yes. Uh, huh, yes. I know. I have heard all that before. I can't run my business on imagination and—"

"No, that you don't!" he fairly snorts in exasperation.

"Whatever it was that Mr. Blank said Mrs. Blank didn't, she kept on yelling, she did, she did, until Mr. Blank's patience went off like a lighted stick of dynamite. Throwing the receiver in the air with such force as to upset the gem clips on my desk, knock off my letter basket and spill ink on the single-space letter in my typewriter, he blued it with curse words and he-man ravings.

"Idea, calling me up afternoon off, day, ask me where to get coal and where to get a man to put it in, why she had to pay so much for coal and pay so much to a man! Better ask President Harding

why labor's so damn high; not me! Ought to be glad to get coal 'tall. Much as I've got to think about. Out to dig for money, dig for coal. OUTRAGE! Wish I lived in a steam-heated flat; no coal, no wife. Women bother the life out of a man with their eternal demands!"

"During this explosion I would sit as quiet as a piece of office furniture, dying to laugh. It was a scene enacted several times a week, but in a rage Mr. Blank was so funny I never got used to him. Once he caught me trying to hide a smile.

"Please, Miss Brown, forgive me. I forgot you were here." He looked so shamefaced and boyish and ill-used, I gave way to my feelings and roared. He laughed with me—tempest and sunshine.

"Thank the Lord," he said, settling back in his chair, "there are some women left who have a sense of humor. Miss Brown, I sometimes think if wives could get a little office training they'd understand their husbands better."

"'Agreed,' said I. 'I'm learning a lot about matrimony, in business.'

"I understand perfectly, for instance, why Mr. Blank asked me later to telephone that he had a business engagement and wouldn't be home for dinner. After one of these trying days, home to him meant an atmosphere of unrest, where the wheels of domestic machinery scraped on his nerves. Before facing it, he must needs have relaxation at his club.

"Not long ago I heard a married man say: 'The first hour after I get home from the office is the most trying of the day. I could go off by myself and relax for an hour before dinner, I'd feel like a new man. But that's the time I have to tackle the furnace, hear about the burst water pipes, and the thousand and one things that have gone wrong during the day. If Elizabeth would only wait until I had smoothed out the office wrinkles, how differently I'd meet her and her domestic trials. But she doesn't seem to understand, and I am afraid to have a frank talk with her for fear of hurting her feelings.'

"Yes, we learn a lot about matrimony in business. And about men, because in their business relations with women they are quite frank. We are on the same footing and, side by side, are playing the same game of pleasing—the stenographer his clients and customers.

"And, while there is no very fine courtesy found there, each demands a certain quality of consideration and respect from the other. And gets it. If a man loses his temper and curses out his stenographer, she leaves him and gets another job and a better-tempered employer. On the other hand, if we do not do our part and take our job seriously, we lose it.

"How seriously does the boss' wife take her job? While we are helping the boss inside, what is she doing outside to help him? Does he sometimes find himself making comparisons between the woman working side by side with him in his office, with the woman pulling away from him in his home life?"

"I remember the wife of a former employer who used to send all of her personal bills to the office for me to add up, draw checks for and pay. She was a social butterfly, apparently assuming no more responsibility than that little bright-hued insect. She sipped the honey of life while the boss drank the bitters—and paid the bills.

"Did he ever complain? No, but I did for him as I made out checks for that trifling wife. It seems to me that if I had somebody furnishing the money for my bills, at least I could bear the exertion of handing it over."

"She would drag the boss off from the most important business to a fool pink tea or garden party that she thought he ought to attend with her 'for the sake of appearances.' But when the boss wanted to bring a business friend home to dinner or show him some special attention 'for the sake of appearances,' it was a different story! She couldn't and wouldn't be bothered. The only time I ever accepted an invitation from an employer was once when the boss needed a woman sorely to fill the place his wife refused.

"Not only did I have to act as financial secretary for this self-occupied woman, but Mrs. Highbrow Greene and find out what the literary program was for Friday and would I mind dropping by on my way home and getting her invitation list, as she wanted cards sent out for

and me. So all you need to do is mail that letter at that time—or sooner, if you have any reason for thinking it ought to reach him.

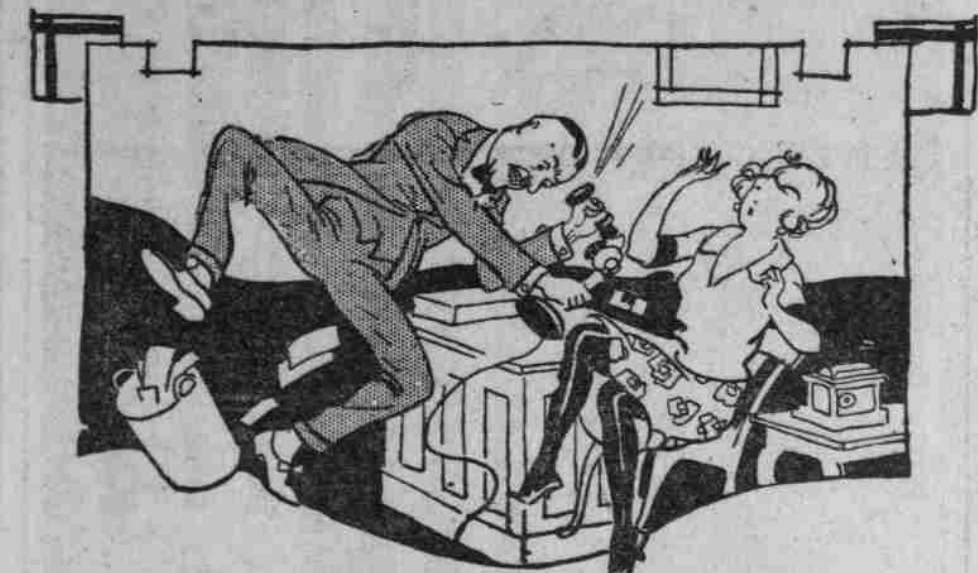
"Oh—I feel so impotent—here on the door of death. I know you're about the only one who'll do exactly what I want done. So I've left things so no one but you can even look at 'em! They will think, 'Poor devil—here's out of the way—we can do as we please with his junk.' But not you, Betty—(thank God for you)—not you! So stand up on your two solid little feet and tell 'em all to go to hell. I'll certainly be with you all the way! Forever!"

"And, in closing, just one more extract from one of Galahad's letters:

"I write because it has always been the great love of my life; because I had as soon try to live without breathing as without writing; because I love it so much I can't let it alone! And I think the physical Joe was crucified for that one purpose—to turn all his creative powers into the intensely beautiful channel of poetry. Think of all the racket I've been through—always frail—made an enlistment in the army simply because the recruiting officer was drunk (and that was the third try at it), discharged husky and well-found my woman and made a great drazer for the future and in six months was hit by pneumonia, which turned into T. B.—so all the lovely dreams went to smash—we parted and the next ten years have been a physical hell—seven operations, all to no purpose—and invalidated at thirty-three years.

"And yet—out of these crowded experiences, out of all this pain and loss, I have found my tongue—I have found the ability to write as I never could have done had I been well and Helen lived and we two had been married! I was set apart for a post—and all other avenues of expression turged from me! But—I am very happy. My writing brings me a continual delight; friends like you fill my days with deep content despite the silly pain; and the world shall know a little more of beauty from what I leave behind. Surely—It doeth all things well! The path lies very clear, now; and a great inner peace is spreading itself over my closing days."

"Oh, dear—that's about all there is to say regarding 'Glory.' And for God's sake don't let them ask Massfield for a preface! I'm leaving a letter to be forwarded to Massfield just one month from the date of my death. That will settle all interference with the relationship between him



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a bridge tea? My regular duties were heavy enough without this additional burden, which necessitated overtime work, but I had to carry it because it was the boss' wife who had imposed it, and cheerfully, too.

"In a business office one learns to do things cheerfully. Men won't have grouchy, fussy women around them in business. Whether we feel like it or not, we have to wear a pleasant front and discharge our duties agreeably. We learn self-control and tact—lessons we never forget.

"Wifehood and motherhood is a big job—much bigger, harder and more responsible than the one we've got. It may not be so full of interest, but it is much fuller of joy and reward. I don't mean to preach to the boss' wife. But, as woman to woman, to pass on what I have learned about matrimony in my job in the hope that it might help her in her job, which is much more worth holding than mine."

Now, then, friend wife, this sensible business woman, who has been in the business world long enough to learn these lessons, is the average stenographer who types your husband's letters every day and runs your chores when you ask her.

Be very sure that friend husband isn't making any very odious comparisons, when he comes home at night, between you and this obliging, agreeable, well-groomed, common-sense young woman who has been interested in his work all day, has carried out his wishes and is alive and alert to the big things going on in his world.

If you happen to be one of those women with a despised body and an exalted soul, better get a move on you to the beauty doctor's. Friend husband won't work with a woman of that type and, first thing you know, he'll refuse to live with one. No matter if we've got the vote and business careers, we've got to keep on being pretty if we want to get

what he runs away with, in other words, as what he runs from.

As a matter of fact, I never actually knew of but one case of a man eloping with his stenographer. Next door to where I visited last summer was a very attractive looking house, setting back in spacious grounds. The windows fairly crinkled in starched curtains; the porches, furnished in painted furniture, were as spotlessly white as though they had just emerged from a Turkish bath. The shrubbery was trimmed to a nicety; bowers bloomed in symmetrical borders in the yard.

A woman came out every afternoon and surveyed her well-groomed property—alone. When her glistening coupe was brought from the garage she went out in it—alone. I rarely ever saw anybody enter that house.

Naturally I grew curious and asked my hostess who our next-door neighbor was.

"Why, that's Mrs. So-and-So," she replied. "Don't you remember, her husband eloped with his stenographer and she divorced him?"

"No," I said, "but I have heard that things like that sometimes happen. Tell me about it."

"People know very little of the actual facts," my hostess answered, a shocked expression on her face. "But Mrs. So-and-So is a lovely woman, a fine house-keeper and was apparently devoted to her husband. Since their divorce she seems broken-hearted and never goes anywhere."

"Um," thought I. "Looks like a pretty clear case of male faithlessness and female vampishness."

My interest was aroused, however, to such an extent that I couldn't let it go at that, and determined to watch Mrs. N. D. Neighbor to see if I could get at the bottom of how so attractive a looking woman had lost out.

And this is what I discovered: Every morning Mrs. N. D. Neighbor was up betimes, superintending the shining and polishing of her house. Rugs were vigorously shaken, windows and moldings washed and the whole morning devoted to this Godlike occupation. Then the blinds were closed and the dust—and sunshine—shut out for the rest of the day.

To prevent any violation of the immaculate purity of the front porch a rug was placed at the foot of the steps, one at the top and another at the entrance door. Mrs. Neighbor saw to the back, too. Whenever a tradesman appeared she implored him to leave his packages at the foot of the back steps so as not to track the porch!

It was just the sort of house-kept house that no man would be permitted to smoke in, to throw his papers around in, to work in or play in, or really live in. And I decided that friend husband ran away from that house as much as from the woman who loved it better than she did him!

Does a man want a model wife, a paragon of perfection? Horrors, no; no more than he deserves one. What he wants is a "fair to middlin'," common-sense, well-balanced wife half the time and a play-fellow the other half. For no matter how old and gray and gouty he may get, a man never outgrows the boy and the longing to be petted, and jollied and made much of.

Be careful, therefore, that you don't send him out to look for another playmate or congenial soulmate; that your matrimonial venture does not flounder on the rack of age in ignoring this eternal boyishness in your husband, this "eternal longing" to be "understood," friend wife of play with him and scold him and love him, and work with him and make him feel that the hollow of your shoulder is too safe a harbor from which to drift.

A Penny for a Husband.

A business man who wanted a book-keeper stated his need in an advertisement. The notice was seen by a young woman who was out of work and who had searched for employment day after day without success. She had just one cent left. This she spent for a postal card, on which she wrote a reply to the advertisement and dropped the card in a street letterbox.

Her application impressed the business man favorably, and he wrote to her asking her to call at his office. She did so and secured the position.

Her modesty and worth, no less than her capability, so won her employer that before many months had passed he offered her his heart and hand, and she accepted and became his wife.

"And to think," he said one day during the honeymoon, "that it all came from your spending your last cent for a postal card and mailing it at a street corner."

"Yes," she replied with a smile and a blush, "I dropped a penny in the slot and got a husband."

## GALAHAD—Oregon's Own Poet

(Continued From Page 4.)

happened it was Browning; he said something was 'as prickly as a whin.' I said to him—'you did not say whin, did you? Don't you mean pin?' He said 'No, whin, Whin!' I did not know there was such a word—but I wrote it down, and when he was gone I approached Noah Webster, to find that whin is a name for Scotch gorse—than which nothing is more prickly."

Galahad's Sweetheart Near in Death.

Galahad loved a Portland girl, referred to as Helen in much of his work. Marriage was impossible on account of his condition, but the flame of affection burned brightly for both until she died during the influenza epidemic of 1919. Galahad swore that he was in communication with her in the other world and that she aided him. This will explain something of the following:

"Then you know The Tent Maker's Pup-  
PUP! When Khayyam came to me that day  
I was thinking about a friend whom I value  
very highly. He said the moment he came  
in: 'Yes—there was a woman like that to  
me once, too.' I knew his voice, but I  
turned to look at him nevertheless. 'Did  
you' said I.

"He asked: 'Have you read that verse of  
mine which runs—'  
"And when yourself with silver foot shall  
pass  
Among the Guests, star-scatter'd on the  
grass.  
And in your joyous errand reach the spot  
Where I made one—turn down an empty  
glass?"

"I said of course that I had read and

loved every word he wrote. Then he explained that verse.

"By the way, he meant the dead. (Guests of God.) The Guests star-scatter'd on the grass—a graveyard. He reminded me of a day I had stood on a low hill and looked down upon a graveyard in the dusk—and he asked me if I didn't think it was in effect like the stars in the sky at night. I was startled to think how like it was. Then he told me he and she had had a saying concerning the 'goblet of love in the heart for a friend, filled to the brim and running over.' And he held that when a friend died, the glass went dry and was gradually filled for another friend. And he did not want her roaming around in the dusk, laying flowers on senseless grass, where nothing that was really him had ever lain. But he wanted that glass in her heart from him turned down empty. And with that explanation, and with him standing at my elbow giving me the words, I wrote 'The Tent Maker's Pup!.'

In "The Tent Maker's Pup!," which attracted a great deal of attention and comment when published, every verse ends with a line from "The Tentmaker."

Love for Oregon Stenographer.

As one of his earlier works he wrote a poem called "Oregon," that he dedicated to his beloved state, with these words written at the top: "If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some corner of a frozen field that is forever Oregon—with the indulgence of Rupert Brooke." This poem was written when he was adventuring.

Just to give some idea of the indomitable spirit of the man, the man who

served in the 11th cavalry, not in the booming times of war, when all men's patriotism was at its height, but in the time of peace, his last letter to his sister, written just eight days before he died, is herewith published:

"April 8, 1922—My Beloved Sister: Since Helen came to me and told me the end was near I've tried to map out everything. My strength is already going and I know I have to work fast. You'll find a letter to you concerning everything about my business in the files—when I am gone.

"Of all poems you will find three carbon copies—always keep at least two. You'll find three carbon copies to each of the letters I write you.

"This one is about that book Stork has now. If he fails to place it, you take it back and work about it over. Omit some of those things you wanted me to omit, and fire it out yourself. But whatever you do, don't do it—unless anyone else touch it—not anyone!"

"Oh, damn it all—why have I got to die? I know I have, but why? Why can't I live to attend to all this myself? But there he goes work about it over. Omit some of and all I can do is leave you such minute details that you can't possibly fail.

"You know I have saved all the best stuff for the later publication—and you know why. So make this volume go with as little substitution as you can.

"Get together with Sid about it, and he'll tell you all you need to know. He's a wise boy and he's my friend.

"Now, dear—that's about all there is to say regarding 'Glory.' And for God's sake don't let them ask Massfield for a preface! I'm leaving a letter to be forwarded to Massfield just one month from the date of my death. That will settle all interference with the relationship between him